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NOTES  
ON  
FOUR PENCIL DRAWINGS

MADE BY  
J. M. W. TURNER

IN MAY OR JUNE 1793

BY  
ALEXANDER J. FINBERG







\$27.00

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REVISED

With four illustrations in half-tone from new plates

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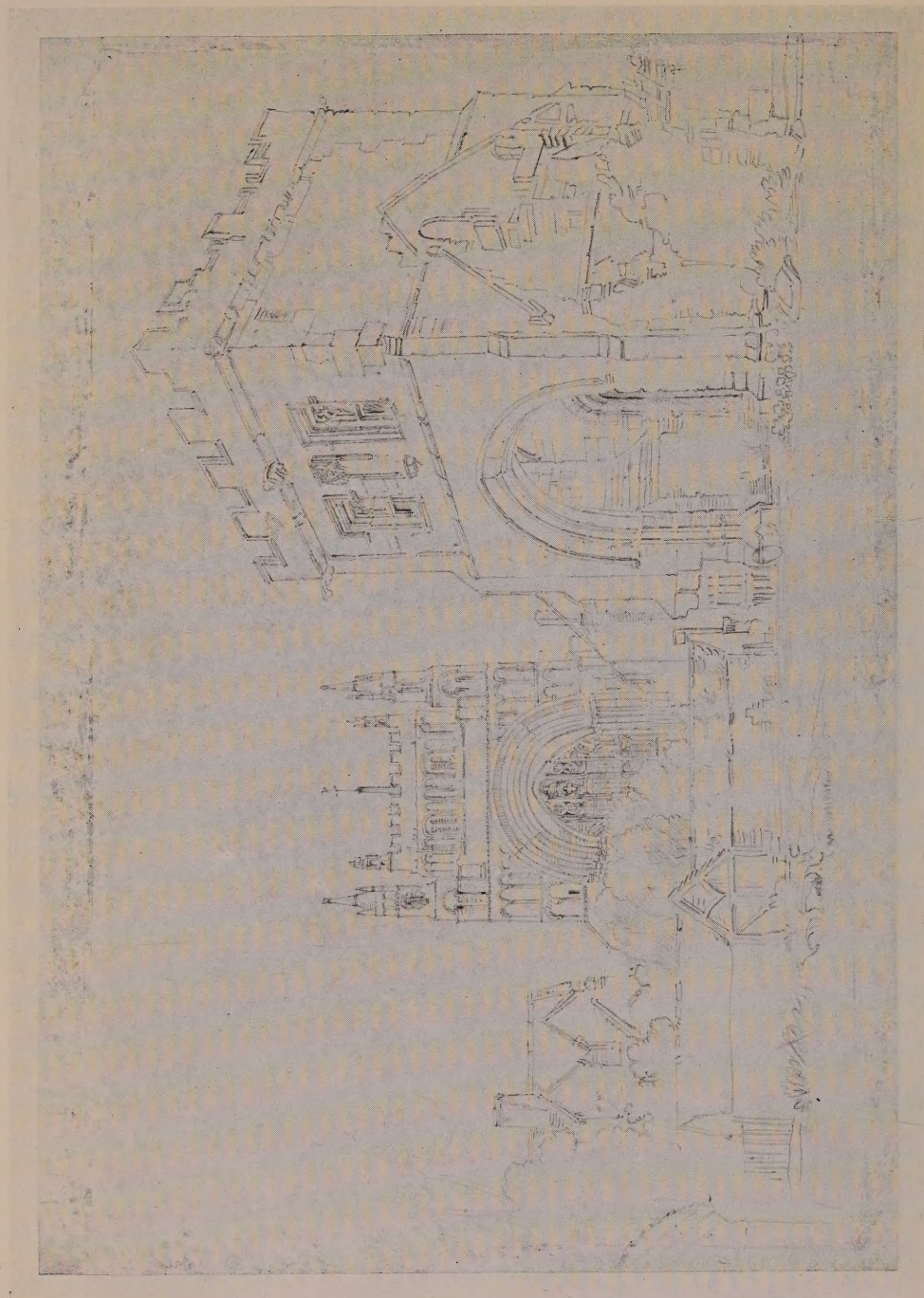
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1922



*First Drawing.*



"TEWKESBURY ABBEY," CHURCH AND GATE.

Pencil.  $9\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$  ins.

600p-3





## Notes on Four Pencil Drawings made by J. M. W. Turner in May or June 1793



N 23 April 1793 Turner was eighteen years of age. He had been an exhibitor at the exhibitions of the Royal Academy since 1790, and he was then a student working in the Life Class of the Academy Schools. Among his fellow-students were Martin Shee—a future President of the Royal Academy—Augustus Pugin, Charles Hayter, Robert Field, and John James Russell. Turner did not shine as a figure draughtsman. His dull and respectable drawings from the life could not have induced the authorities to regard him as a clever or brilliant student. But he was evidently doing his best to make up for his want of cleverness by unremitting application.

In the January of that year he had been at work every evening, with two exceptions, drawing from the living model. During February and March, as the sending-in day for the Royal Academy exhibition approached, he had been less regular in his attendance at the schools, being busy in his little studio in Hand Court, Maiden Lane, on the water-colours he intended to send to the exhibition. At the beginning of April the schools were closed. Having seen



three of his water-colours hung in the exhibition, the young artist set off to the West on a couple of months' sketching tour.

He probably took the coach to Bristol, where his uncle's friend Narraway lived. From Bristol he went into Wales, visiting Chepstow and Tintern, where he had been the previous year, making his way to Hereford and Malvern. At or near Malvern he seems to have stayed with a Mr. Arrowsmith, and from there he visited Worcester, Evesham, and Tewkesbury.

Some of the pencil drawings which Turner made on this tour are now in the National Gallery, London, but the majority of them were at one time in the collection of the late Mr. Charles Stokes. Four of these are now in the possession of Mr. H. W. Underdown.

The most important of them is the careful study of "Tewkesbury Abbey," with the Abbey Gate on the right ( $9\frac{7}{8} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$  in.). It is an exhaustive linear statement of all the details Turner would have wanted if he had to make a finished water-colour of the scene. The local colours and the light and shade would have been supplied from memory, but as no commission for this subject seems to have been forthcoming no further use was made of the drawing.

The second drawing, simply inscribed "Evesham" by Turner ( $10\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  in.), represents All Saints' Church. It is situated close to the larger church of St. Lawrence, in a common churchyard. It was restored in 1876, but is chiefly remarkable for the chapel adjoining the south aisle, the resting-place of Abbot Lichfield (1514-1546), with its fine fan-tracery vaulting. Turner made two water-colour drawings of St. Lawrence, one signed and dated 1793, which were recently exhibited at Messrs. Agnew's gallery.

It is difficult to speak with certainty about the identity of the buildings represented in the third and fourth drawings. The one called "Old Ruins" ( $10\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  in.) may represent the ruins of a priory gateway. The other, "Hereford" ( $8\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{3}{4}$  in.), seems to represent a small priory church at or near Hereford, with the entrance to the Lady Chapel filled (after the Pillage) with tracery



*Second Drawing.*



"EVESHAM," ALL SAINTS' CHURCH.

Pencil.  $10\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  ins

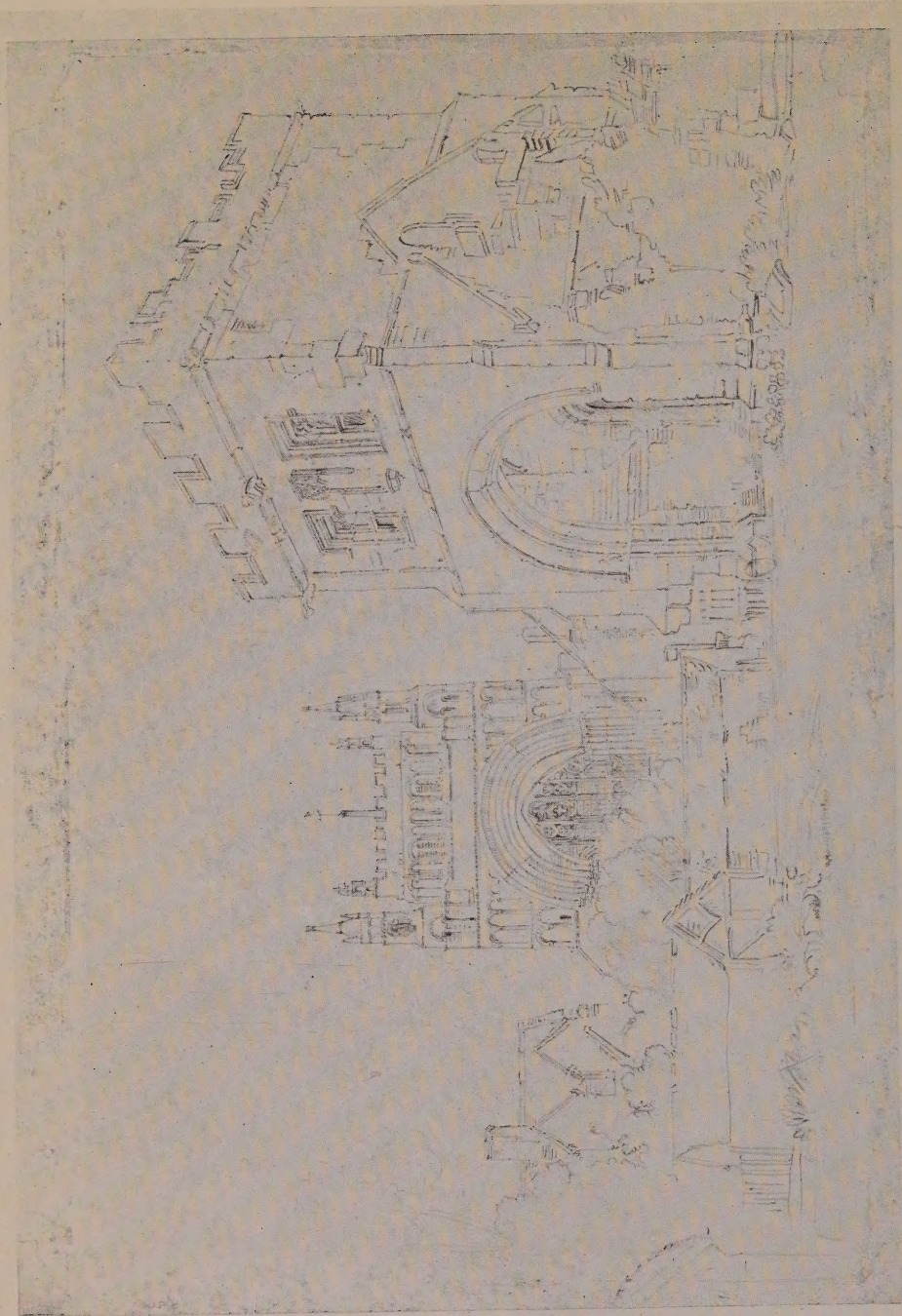












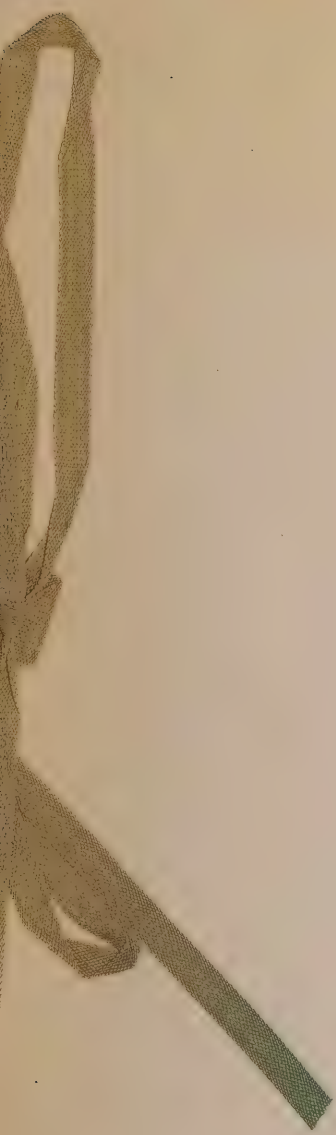






























*Third Drawing.*



"OLD RUINS," UNIDENTIFIED.

Pencil.  $10\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  ins.



from elsewhere. A water-colour of the Black Friars' Cross at Hereford is now in the Oldham Corporation Art Gallery (Lees Donation). The pencil drawing on which it is based is exactly similar in character to these drawings, and is now in the National Gallery (Turner Bequest, XIII, E). There is also a pencil drawing of a view of the old Chapter House in the same collection (XIII, A). The finished water-colour of this subject was once in the possession of the late Mr. Humphrey Roberts. It was included in his sale at Christie's, in May 1908, but it was erroneously described in the catalogue as a drawing of Glastonbury.

These four pencil drawings were certainly made towards the end of May or in June, 1793, when Turner was only just eighteen years of age. Like all the drawings made from nature on this sketching tour they were made on loose sheets of paper, and not in a sketch-book. They suffer perhaps in immediate effectiveness from Turner's severe economy of method. His aim at that time was to produce accurate and carefully elaborated water-colours of buildings and scenes. The best way to produce such work he had found was to make drawings in line from nature, giving all the facts he would want to use when he came to "work up" the subject in his studio. The local colours of objects he found he could rely upon his memory to supply, and the light and shade of a scene he found it best to ignore when drawing from nature. For one thing, the light was always changing, and it would have distracted his attention from details of form and structure if he had tried to record it. He knew enough of form to supply the light and shade if only he had a clear linear statement of the shapes he had to deal with. And there were other advantages in putting off the treatment of light and shade until he could concentrate all his attention on it. He could not only make it more consistent throughout than if he had copied it piecemeal from nature, he could also select an effect which would knit the whole subject together and focus the interest of the spectator on those parts which he felt to be most important.

In spite, therefore, of the absence of colour and light and shade from these beautiful pencil drawings, they are very precious as examples of Turner's handiwork. They bring us into contact with the mind of a great artist in the early stages of his development. When these drawings were made even he himself could have had no conception of the power and range of the work he was destined to produce. But we who know and glory in the great things with which he has enriched the world may find delight and much useful instruction in the contemplation of the apprentice-work by which he sedulously trained himself for his future triumphs.

August 1921.







"HEREFORD," A SMALL PRIORY CHURCH, UNIDENTIFIED, AT OR NEAR HEREFORD.

Pencil.  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$  ins.







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